



# SPOTLIGHT

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A Quarterly Newsletter of the Dorchester County Department of Social Services

July - September 2008

## Dorchester DSS Celebrates Child Support Awareness Month

The Dorchester County Child Support Division celebrated Child Support Awareness Month in August. Four (4) programs were held locally to educate the public on the operation of the division, and to answer their questions and concerns.

Child Support Awareness represents an opportunity to honor the thousands of Child Support professionals across the country, who are committed to making a difference in the lives of children through their work. It is also an opportunity to salute parents who support their children emotionally and financially; and a chance to inform the community about the Child Support Program and resources available for parents and employers.

The first national proclamation of Child Support Awareness Month was in 1995, by President William Clinton. He called on Americans to

observe the month with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities.

During the opening ceremony, Stacy Rodgers, Deputy Secretary for Programs at the Department of Human Resources, presented the Child Support Specialists at Dorchester County DSS with a proclamation from Governor Martin O'Malley. Its purpose was to declare August as Child Support Awareness Month. A letter from the Governor to the Child Support Specialists praised their dedication and relentless efforts in promoting the well-being and development of children, by ensuring that parents pay child support in a consistent and timely manner.

"The ABC's of Child Support" offered a basic overview of the Child Support Program and other resources available to parents, such as the Fatherhood and the Work Opportunities Programs. The Fatherhood Program seeks to involve

the non-custodial Fathers in the lives of their children. The Work Opportunities Program helps non-custodial parents locate and retain employment. Both programs stress the importance of contributing to the children's future.

"The Child Support Process and Earnings Withholding Orders", a forum for employers, provided information and resources on withholding earnings from employees, as mandated by the courts. It was an opportunity to discuss issues and questions employers might encounter in the process.

"I Owe How Much?", a forum designed for parents owing current arrears in Child Support, provided an opportunity for non-custodial parents to learn more about resources offered by the program, enforcement tools, and consequences when parents do not meet their financial obligations. Parents were able to discuss their individual cases with a Child Support Specialist.

For questions about Child Support, please call the following toll free number: **1-800-332-6347**.

### Adult Services Programs Meet the Needs of Dorchester Citizens

What happens to people living in our local community when they are unable to function independently? As a person ages they may become physically or mentally disabled, making assistance necessary. The older population is increasing rapidly in the United States. People who are age sixty-five (65) or older made up 12.7% of the population in 1998. This percentage is expected to double by the year 2050. The rural counties of the Eastern Shore (Dorchester, Somerset, Wicomico and



(l to r, front: Millicent Maloney, Attorney, Renee Cooper, Support Agent, Ella Stanley, Leadworker, William McDonnell, Director, Stacy Rodgers, Deputy Secretary for Programs, Ruth Jones, Support Agent, Donette English, Support Agent, Carmen Pratt, Assistant Director of Child Support, (l to r, back: Loretta Tyler, Program Supervisor, Erica Stanley, Support Agent, Carolyn Burke, Fiscal Clerk, Dena Wanex, Support Agent, and Valencia Stagg, Support Agent.

Worcester) expect the population of adults sixty-five and older to almost double between the years of 2000-2030 (from *The "Graying" of Delmarva*, written by BEACON, of SU, 2004).

This growth will create many challenges for our region. Older adults have more health problems, need specialized geriatric services, and will increasingly need linked housing and healthcare services. Many physical problems are linked with mental problems, and may be best evaluated using a team approach. The professionals involved may be doctors, nurses, physical therapists, psychologists and social workers. Seniors will try to remain in their own homes as long as possible. Services will be needed for them to remain at home, with assistance.

Dorchester County Social Services has Adult Services programs that may meet their needs. These programs provide services which address the progressive limitations of the adult (18 years and up). The Department of Human Resources (DHR) has programs which support and protect persons with disabilities, the elderly, and the mentally impaired. Their mental or cognitive state may leave them vulnerable to abuse, neglect, or exploitation. DHR is the only public agency to provide intensive social work management to adults regardless of age, income, or disability.

DHR's goal is to provide the least invasive service required for each person. A thorough assessment is done to determine the person's needs. DHR seeks to provide community based alternatives to nursing home and institutional care. In most cases, the community based program costs less and is less restrictive.

The least restrictive program is the **In-Home-Aide-Service (IHAS)** program. Human Service Associates visit the person's home and assist them with daily living activities they are unable to perform alone. IHAS helps these individuals remain independent. The maximum amount of service per week to a customer is twenty (20) hours. Dorchester has 31 adults receiving IHAS.

**Social Services to Adults (SSTA)** is a program where case management is provided by a

licensed social worker to adults in crisis. The program's goal is to provide the service needed to insure long term stability. Clients are assessed, crisis intervention is done, and pertinent information and referral to community resources are provided. The total number of cases for SSTA is 89.

The **Adult Protective Service (APS)** program's purpose is to protect adults from abuse, neglect, or exploitation. A report is received citing a suspicion of abuse, neglect, or exploitation, and must be investigated. If the report is confirmed, or indicated, APS social workers will act to insure the safety of the person. APS staff partner with law enforcement and the State's Attorney's Office to prosecute abusers. This program is serving 18 adults.

**Project Home** is a program where adults are placed in an environment where help and supervision are provided. Adults are placed in the home of a provider. Providers are trained by DHR and must be certified. Criminal background checks, home inspections, and interviews are completed for each provider. Adult Services case managers monitor providers to insure clients are receiving appropriate resources. Residents receive continuing case management services after placement. A total of 15 adults live in Project Homes.

DHR expanded the Project Home program in 1989, to serve persons infected with HIV/AIDS. Case management services are provided to infected persons, enabling them to remain in their homes. Special funding provides medical services and helps avert crises. IHAS funding was provided to infected persons for personal assistance.

HIV/AIDS customers receive services through three grant funded programs. The Housing Opportunities for Persons with Aids (**HOPWA**) Program is regional, serving the seven counties of the Eastern Shore. Two case managers and one housing coordinator provide services to 16 qualifying adults. The **Ryan White Program** serves 14 HIV/AIDS customers meeting specified criteria. Those not meeting guidelines for either of the above programs (35) are served by the **Project Home HIV/AIDS Community Program**.

**Adult Public Guardianship** is the most restrictive of the available programs. The individual has been proven incompetent to make decisions effecting personal welfare. Two physicians have certified this truth in court. The judge will appoint a guardian of the person to insure their safety and well-being. Dorchester has 4 guardianship cases.

Each Maryland County has an **Adult Public Guardianship Review Board (APGRB)** to review guardianship cases. Dorchester County's board is composed of volunteers appointed by the local county council. Meetings are held bi-annually, where each case is reviewed. Board members make recommendations on continuing, modifying, or terminating guardianship cases to the court.

From the least to the most restrictive option, Adult Services programs are available to meet every need. Eligibility is based on medical documentation and an assessment of a person's functional ability. If you would like to discuss options for care of a loved one, contact Dorchester County Social Services at **410-901-4100**.



#### SPOTLIGHT on DSS

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